

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Carol C. Lam***

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***For Immediate Release***

**NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - May 1, 2006

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced today the guilty pleas of Lawrence “Larry” D. Remer, a San Diego political consultant, and Serafin A. Zasqueta, former President and Superintendent of Southwestern College. Both defendants pled guilty before United States District Judge John A. Houston to an Information charging them with illegally using public funds from the Southwestern Community College District to pay for political activity in relation to the Proposition AA Bond measure which was on the November 2000 ballot. Proposition AA was a bond measure seeking \$89 million in bonds for Southwestern College.

According to Assistant United States Attorney John J. Rice, who prosecuted the case, the charges stemmed from a scheme to illegally use public funds from Southwestern College to pay Murphy Putnam Media, Inc., a political consulting firm located in Alexandria, Virginia, for the production costs of a television commercial made as part of the campaign to advocate the passage of Proposition AA. According to court documents, the defendants used funds from the theater arts department at Southwestern College to pay a

\$5,890.47 bill from Murphy Putnam Media, Inc., and created a false story that the money was to purchase “outtakes” from Murphy Putnam for educational and instructional purposes.

As a result of their plea, the defendants each face a maximum term of imprisonment of one year in custody to be followed by a one year term of supervised release. In addition to any custodial sentence the court may impose, each defendant has agreed to pay full restitution to Southwestern Community College, pay a fine of \$5,000 and perform 100 hours of community service.

United States Attorney Lam said, “These educational funds were never meant to be a cookie jar for the consultants to dip into after they took their fees and commissions. Today’s guilty pleas are an important step to safeguarding our public funds.”

Sentencing for both defendants is scheduled for July 21, 2006 at 9:30 a.m. before United States District Judge John A. Houston. The investigation was directed by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

## **DEFENDANTS**

LAWRENCE “LARRY” D. REMER

SERAFIN A. ZASUETA

## **SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Number of Defendants: 2

Charge: Title 18, United States Code, Section 600 - Promise of Benefit for Political Activity

Maximum Penalties: One year imprisonment; \$100,000 fine; and 1 year supervised release

## **INVESTIGATIVE AGENCY**

Federal Bureau of Investigation